



# COVID-19

## COVID-19 Community Levels

A measure of the impact of COVID-19 illness on health and healthcare systems

Updated Mar. 3, 2022

### Overview

More tools than ever before are available to prevent COVID-19 from placing strain on communities and healthcare systems.

With current high levels of vaccination and high levels of population immunity from both vaccination and infections, the risk of medically significant disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 is greatly reduced for most people. At the same time, we know that [some people and communities](#), such as our oldest citizens, people who are immunocompromised, and people with disabilities, are at higher risk for serious illness and face challenging decisions navigating a world with COVID-19.

In addition to protecting those at highest risk of severe outcomes, focusing on reducing medically significant illness and minimizing strain on the healthcare system reflects our current understanding of SARS-CoV-2 infection, immunity from vaccination and infection, and the tools we have available. Vaccines are highly protective against severe disease, and continuing to expand vaccine coverage and ensuring people are [up to date with vaccination](#) is essential to protecting individuals against hospitalizations and deaths.

Health officials and individuals should consider current information about COVID-19 hospitalizations in the community, as well as the potential for strain on the local health system and COVID-19 cases in the community, when making decisions about community prevention strategies and individual behaviors. Communities and individuals should also make decisions based on whether they are at high risk for severe disease and take into account inequities in access to prevention strategies.

COVID-19 Community Levels can help communities and individuals make decisions based on their local context and their unique needs. Community vaccination coverage and other local information, like early alerts from surveillance, such as through wastewater or the number of emergency department visits for COVID-19, when available, can also inform decision making for health officials and individuals.



**For Healthcare Facilities:** COVID-19 Community Levels do **not** apply in healthcare settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes. Instead, healthcare settings should continue to use [community transmission rates](#) and follow CDC's [infection prevention and control recommendations](#) for healthcare workers.



### COVID-19 County Check

Find community levels and prevention steps by county.

Select a Location (all fields required)

State



County



Go

 **Download or Print:** Indicators for Monitoring COVID-19 Community Levels and Implementing Prevention Strategies

# How CDC Measures the COVID-19 Community Levels

CDC looks at the combination of three metrics — new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days, the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days — to determine the COVID-19 community level. New COVID-19 admissions and the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied represent the current potential for strain on the health system. Data on new cases acts as an early warning indicator of potential increases in health system strain in the event of a COVID-19 surge.

Using these data, the COVID-19 community level is classified as low, medium, or high.

See more information about CDC's COVID-19 community level and indicators

COVID-19 Community Levels – Use the Highest Level that Applies to Your Community				
New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 people in the past 7 days	Indicators	Low	Medium	High
Fewer than 200	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	<10.0	10.0-19.9	≥20.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	<10.0%	10.0-14.9%	≥15.0%
200 or more	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	NA	<10.0	≥10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	NA	<10.0%	≥10.0%

The COVID-19 community level is determined by the higher of the new admissions and inpatient beds metrics, based on the current level of new cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days

To find out the COVID-19 community level:

- First determine whether a county, state, or territory has fewer than 200 new cases per 100,000 people in the past 7 days or 200 new cases or more per 100,000 people in the past 7 days.
- Then, determine the level (low, medium, or high) for the new admissions and inpatient beds and indicators using the scale for the area's number for new cases.
- The COVID-19 Community Level is based on the higher of the new admissions and inpatient beds metrics.
- Check your county's [COVID-19 Community Level](#).

## U.S. COVID-19 Community Levels by County

Compare COVID-19 Community Levels across all counties in the United States.

[Check County Map](#)



## COVID-19 Community Level and COVID-19 Prevention

People who are [up to date on vaccines](#) have much lower risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated people. When making decisions about community prevention strategies and individual preventive behaviors in addition to vaccination, health officials and people should consider the COVID-19 Community Level in the county. Layered prevention strategies — like staying up to date on vaccines, screening testing, ventilation and wearing masks — can help limit severe disease and reduce the potential for strain on the healthcare system. CDC recommends using county COVID-19 Community Levels to help determine which COVID-19 prevention measures to use for individuals and communities.

Some community settings such as schools and some high-risk congregate settings such as correctional facilities and homeless shelters might include additional layers of prevention (e.g., physical distancing, contact tracing) based on information and data about the characteristics of the setting. High-risk congregate settings may implement added prevention as needed in the event of a facility outbreak even if COVID-19 Community Levels in the surrounding community are low. Jurisdictions should monitor health equity in vaccine and other prevention efforts and assess hospitalization data where possible to ensure outreach occurs to address any disparities in access to high quality healthcare. Recommendations based on COVID-19 Community Levels may not apply to [healthcare settings](#) such as hospitals or long-term care facilities.

COVID-19 Community level	Individual- and household-level prevention behaviors	Community-level prevention strategies (as recommended by state or local authorities)
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters</li> <li>Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible</li> <li>Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19</li> <li>If you are immunocompromised or <a href="#">high risk</a> for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing)</li> <li>Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity</li> <li>Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces</li> <li>Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at <a href="#">high risk</a> for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations</li> </ul>

COVID-19 Community level	Individual- and household-level prevention behaviors	Community-level prevention strategies (as recommended by state or local authorities)
<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are immunocompromised or <a href="#">high risk</a> for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions (e.g., testing)</li> <li>- Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing)</li> <li>- Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you have household or social contact with someone at <a href="#">high risk</a> for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- consider self-testing to detect infection before contact</li> <li>- consider wearing a mask when indoors with them</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters</li> <li>• Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible</li> <li>• Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect people at <a href="#">high risk</a> for severe illness or death by ensuring equitable access to vaccination, testing, treatment, support services, and information</li> <li>• Consider implementing screening testing or other testing strategies for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in workplaces, schools, or other community settings as appropriate</li> <li>• Implement enhanced prevention measures in high-risk congregate settings (see guidance for <a href="#">correctional facilities</a> and <a href="#">homeless shelters</a>)</li> <li>• Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity</li> <li>• Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces</li> <li>• Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at <a href="#">high risk</a> for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations</li> </ul>

COVID-19 Community level	Individual- and household-level prevention behaviors	Community-level prevention strategies (as recommended by state or local authorities)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear a well-fitting mask<sup>1</sup> indoors in public, regardless of vaccination status (including in K-12 schools and other indoor community settings)</li> <li>• If you are immunocompromised or <b>high risk</b> for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Wear a <b>mask or respirator</b> that provides you with greater protection</li> <li>– Consider avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public where you could be exposed</li> <li>– Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions (e.g., testing)</li> <li>– Have a plan for rapid testing if needed (e.g., having home tests or access to testing)</li> <li>– Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you are a candidate for treatments like oral antivirals, PrEP, and monoclonal antibodies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If you have household or social contact with someone at <b>high risk</b> for severe disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– consider self-testing to detect infection before contact</li> <li>– consider wearing a mask when indoors with them</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters</li> <li>• Maintain improved ventilation throughout indoor spaces when possible</li> <li>• Follow CDC recommendations for isolation and quarantine, including getting tested if you are exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider setting-specific recommendations for prevention strategies based on local factors</li> <li>• Implement healthcare surge support as needed</li> <li>• Protect people at <b>high risk</b> for severe illness or death by ensuring equitable access to vaccination, testing, treatment, support services, and information</li> <li>• Consider implementing screening testing or other testing strategies for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in workplaces, schools, or other community settings as appropriate</li> <li>• Implement enhanced prevention measures in high-risk congregate settings (see guidance for <b>correctional facilities</b> and <b>homeless shelters</b>)</li> <li>• Distribute and administer vaccines to achieve high community vaccination coverage and ensure health equity</li> <li>• Maintain improved ventilation in public indoor spaces</li> <li>• Ensure access to testing, including through point-of-care and at-home tests for all people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communicate with organizations and places that serve people who are immunocompromised or at <b>high risk</b> for severe disease to ensure they know how to get rapid testing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure access and equity in vaccination, testing, treatment, community outreach, support services for disproportionately affected populations</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> At all levels, people can wear a mask based on personal preference, informed by personal level of risk. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

## Additional Resources

Visit [COVID Data Tracker](#)\* to learn more about the indicators and metrics used for COVID-19 community level in your [county](#). Please note that county-level data are not available for territories. For the most accurate and up-to-date data for any county or state, visit the relevant [health department website](#).

\*COVID Data Tracker may display data that differ from state and local websites. This can be due to differences in how data were collected, how metrics were calculated, or the timing of web updates.